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THE CENTURY OF
ANGLO-AMERICAN PEACE

BY

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Washington, D. C.
THE AMERICAN PEACE SOCIETY
December, 1914

The Century of Anglo-American Peace.*

By James L. Tryon.

"Let us now praise famous men" (Ecclesiasticus 44:1).

To speak of celebrating a century of peace while the greatest war in history is raging is characteristic of the optimism of the British and the American peoples. In days however dark they believe in the genuineness of their friendship with each other, and in the survival of their systems of government, which mean freedom for mankind. But if we persist in going on with the celebration, we shall doubtless have to modify some of the plans which its promoters originally hoped to carry out. We may have to come down to the bare essentials. We may be delayed. The international situation may prevent the participation of friends whom we had hoped might join us. But, whatever may be the programme of exercises, we can dwell upon the blessings of peace and the advantages of settling international disputes by pacific instead of warlike means. We can point to the security of the unfortified border line of more than three thousand miles between the United States and Canada, to the arbitrations that have decided some of our most difficult controversies, and to that wise diplomacy which has changed warlike situations, whenever they have threatened, into conditions of continued peace. These instances afford valuable lessons to ourselves for the future and are a message of hope for the whole world

* An address delivered at St. Margaret's, Westminster Abbey, Sunday, September 6, by Dr. Tryon, Director of the New England Department of the American Peace Society.

of today. We can commemorate especially the services of men and women who have helped to keep our people on terms of lasting good will. To the peacemakers let there be tributes of praise.

Who are some of the heroes of our hundred years of peace?

First of all, there are the signers of the Treaty of Ghent. And of these stands out pre-eminently Albert Gallatin; for to him probably, more than to any other man of that group of commissioners, is due the credit of bringing the negotiations of Ghent to a conclusion. Gallatin, with his conciliatory counsels, first brought his own colleagues into agreement, and then drew the British and American plenipotentiaries together upon common ground. As an old man, it was his proud satisfaction to say "I was ever a minister of peace," and that he had given the last twenty years of his political life to preventing war between our two nations, and after the restoration of peace, to settling as many points of difference as was at the time practicable. Gallatin, though an American citizen, was born and educated a Swiss. He may well stand for that type of men who, though not of British antecedents, have as ministers of the United States helped to keep the peace not only between our two countries, but among the other nations of the world. And let us not forget our friends in Belgium, the citizens of Ghent, who made a home for our commissioners and honored them with a notable banquet when they finished their work. We should remember with gratitude the services of those neutrals who as arbitrators have adjudged questions between us, like those involved in the *Alabama* case, which we could not settle equitably for ourselves.

But of British and American names distinctly there should be special recognition. Webster and Ashburton should be worthily remembered. Great patriots of their day, great, not because each was loyal to his own country in the conventional way in which all lovers of their own land are expected to be true to it; but because each studied his country's good in doing justice to the other's interests—these men are to be numbered among our

immortals. An exhaustive correspondence, official interviews, even the arbitration of a friendly sovereign (the King of Holland) had failed in an endeavor to determine the true northeastern boundary between the United States and Canada; and the controversy over it was complicated with other exasperating disputes, some of them concerning our border, others relating to the release of slaves, and still others to the right of searching vessels on the high seas in times of peace. A military credit was voted, troops were placed under arms, our countries were on the verge of war, when Webster and Ashburton were selected by their governments to make a peaceful settlement by treaty. Not as champions of old, fighting a duel upon the chance issues of which the fate of nations depended, but as the ambassadors of justice and reason, these men acted together to remove the obstacles to our peace. See them there in Washington, in the last years of their splendid lives, the renowned orator and the public-spirited banker, laboring day after day to bring harmony out of the disheartening chaos which then prevailed. Knowing that men are tempted to stand by their opinions when once they are put into writing, and to prolong their arguments, these commissioners resolve to keep no written protocol of their daily proceedings. It testifies to the unselfish purpose of Lord Ashburton, as shown in one of his own letters, that during a public service of thirty-five years in Parliament, his principal aim had been to impress on others the necessity of, and to promote himself, peace and harmony between our countries; and that, although the prevailing good sense of both prevented his entertaining any serious apprehensions on the subject, he was one of those who had always watched with anxiety any threatening circumstances, any clouds which however small might, through the neglect of some, or the malevolence of others, end in a storm, the disastrous consequences of which defy exaggeration. Such was the language, such the spirit of this statesman, who, it is regrettable to say, had to face criticisms in Parliament for his concessions. Webster, acting in a liberal manner for the Federal Government, was also criticised by opponents in the

Senate. Thus the orator, who was the son of a Revolutionary captain, and whose speeches supplied his countrymen with their watchwords of patriotism, exemplified in his own conduct those pacific sentiments of his Bunker Hill oration in which he said, "Let it not be supposed that our object is to perpetuate national hostility, or even to cherish a mere military spirit. It is higher, nobler. We consecrate our work to the spirit of national independence, and we wish that the light of peace may rest upon it forever."

Two other high-minded men who, at a critical moment, helped to save our countries from war with each other were Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, and William H. Seward. Their service was in the *Trent* affair. What was that case? To most of us it is a mere paragraph in our text-books of history; but it was the most perilous of all the misunderstandings that have occurred between our two countries. It also illustrates at once that good sense of our two peoples upon which Lord Ashburton rightly relied in moments when he might have felt apprehension, and those extraordinary contrasts in national feeling which among even the most neighborly nations come with startling surprise. It happened in less than a year after our two governments had exchanged appreciative messages over the visit of the Prince of Wales to America.

It was November, 1861. North and South were in the midst of their dreadful civil war. Captain Wilkes, an Antarctic hero and zealous Federal officer, acting from patriotic motives, but on his own responsibility, had taken from the British Colonial steamer *Trent* two distinguished commissioners of the Confederate government, Mr. Mason and Mr. Slidell, together with their secretaries, who were sent to secure for their cause the support of England and France. The *Trent* was, of course, a neutral vessel. It was plying between neutral ports. It carried no contraband. It was not chartered by the Confederacy. On board were no Confederate army or navy officers or soldiers. The gentlemen who were arrested were civilians. But at first sight these facts were overlooked, as was the resemblance of the

case to instances that occurred before the War of 1812, when the United States complained of the violations of American ships by Great Britain. Many American lawyers and even judges therefore declared that the United States officer was within his rights. A storm of delirious joy swept over the Northern States upon the receipt of the news of the captures, which was followed by a resolution of Congress and a letter from the Secretary of the Navy approving the action of Captain Wilkes. These signs of approval were in part due to a suspicion that British sympathies were with the South, and in part to a feeling that the seizure of the men was equivalent to a Federal victory. But what was the attitude of the public mind in England? An equally tempestuous period of excitement followed here, where it was felt that the British flag had been insulted and the neutral rights of Great Britain transgressed. The indignant cry went from lip to lip, "Bear this, bear all!" Extensive preparations for war began. Troops were shipped to Canada to enforce, if necessary, the demands of the British government, which deemed it unwise to appear to be afraid of the United States.

Then came the far-sighted action of Prince Albert. It will be remembered that he was not only the devoted husband of the Queen, but one of her most trusted counsellors. He examined the somewhat peremptory dispatch which the British government had prepared to send to the United States. His mind was impressed with the warlike nature of the crisis, and perhaps also with the horror of shedding more fraternal blood than was already being poured out in our then divided but now happily united country. He suggested in a letter which he prepared for the Queen the intimation of a belief in the good intentions of the United States Government; that she would have liked to see an expression of a hope that the Federal naval officer had acted without authority, but that if he had acted with it he must have misapprehended his instructions, and that it was believed that after due consideration the United States would spontaneously surrender the prisoners and make

a suitable apology for the breach of international law that had been committed.

We can see now the gracious Prince, on the last working morning of his life, an invalid, scarcely able to hold his pen, writing his kindly comment on the draft and submitting it to the Queen for her approval. Queen Victoria, always a friend of the American people, makes a few slight changes in the text before it is sent to the government. The ideas which are contained in the draft are accepted in the right spirit by Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, and incorporated in a new dispatch which is prepared by Lord Russell, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The dispatch is delivered in Washington by Lord Lyons, the British Minister there, whose forbearance up to that time has saved trouble, and whose courtesy now smooths the way for Mr. Seward, the American Secretary of State. President Lincoln and his Cabinet meet, and the case is laid before them. The President is a true lover of peace. Up to this time he has been publicly non-committal, but he is one of a few Federal leaders who think that a mistake has been made. The decision is reached that in accordance with long-established American views on the points of law considered the captives should be surrendered.

But the danger of conflict is not over yet. The sensitive feelings of the people of the North have to be considered in the official reply. Then Secretary Seward, at whose call to rise in defense of national honor they would have undertaken a new war, frames an answer which, because of its magnanimity and tactfulness, satisfies both parties to the controversy, and places him among the greatest peace-making diplomatists in our time. The Confederate commissioners are surrendered and there is no war between our two countries.

In these days when Christianity seeks more than ever to emphasize the good side of life rather than the evil, and when we should put a premium on wisely directed efforts for international conciliation, it is interesting to recall an incident with which the *Trent* affair finally closed. A contingent of British soldiers which was destined for Canada, where it was expected to support

the diplomatic contention of the home government, arrived on the American side of the Atlantic. It was winter. Access to Canada through the proper seaport was impracticable because of frozen harbors. Might these troops pass through the territory of the United States? was asked of the American Secretary of State. Permission at once came from Mr. Seward for the landing and transporting to Canada or elsewhere of troops, stores, and munitions of any kind without exception or reservation! Here is a bright burst of international sunshine after a cloudy day. Two nations that are so self-disciplined as ours have proved themselves to be, and that can treat each other with the patience shown by them in the *Trent* affair, should never in the future even think of threatening each other with war, nor ever expect to forgive themselves if, laying aside their good nature and their good sense, they should come to a clash of arms.

As for the humane Prince, he never lived to learn of the good results of his intervention in the official correspondence of our two nations. His modest but beneficent life, shortened by his devotion to his Queen and country, closed before the terms of the British note had been complied with. But the poet Tennyson, speaking for us in his "Idylls of the King," says:

"Commingle with the gloom of imminent war,
The shadow of his loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world."

And then, after paying tribute to the self-effacement of the Prince, the poet asks:

"For where is he
Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstained, than his?
Or how should England dreaming of *his* sons
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor—
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam

Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
 Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
 Beyond all titles, and a household name,
 Hereafter, thro' all times, ALBERT THE GOOD."

These are types of men who have helped to keep peace among our people; but great as they are, they are types only. The unbiased judgment of Joshua Bates, a citizen of the United States, residing in England and acting as umpire in the settlement of financial claims between our countries, the insistence of Mr. Gladstone and Hamilton Fish upon the Geneva Arbitration, the initial steps taken by Sir John Rose to make a settlement by arbitration possible, the courage of Premier Sir John A. Macdonald in representing what he believed to be the best interests of Canada in making the Treaty of Washington, the impartiality of Charles Francis Adams, staunch citizen of one of the litigating countries, impartial judge of both, together with the unimpeachable honor of the British government in paying the award of \$15,500,000 in damages for the *Alabama* claims, deserve from us all grateful recognition.

Nor should we fail to record with gratitude the moderation of Lord Salisbury when, in responding to the demands of President Cleveland at the time of the dispute over the Venezuelan boundary, he decided for arbitration instead of proposing war. We should acknowledge in appropriate ways the debt we owe for our century of peace to all the sovereigns of Great Britain and their friendly disposed Ministers, to our Presidents, to the Governors General and Ministers of Canada, with which the people of the United States are in closer relations than with any other of the British Dominions, and to the Ambassadors of both our countries. Time forbids mention of the various classes of men who, though not in official position, have strengthened the ties of good feeling between the United States and Great Britain; but it would be a worthy piece of work for some lover of our two lands to make up this record. There was George Peabody, the American business man, resident in London, friend of the poor, patron of education, benefactor of both countries, whose body, after

it had rested in Westminster Abbey, was sent home with royal honors in a British warship; and there was George W. Childs, hospitable friend of British visitors in America, who gave the memorial fountain at Stratford-on-Avon and memorials to our common authors in Westminster Abbey, St. Margaret's, and elsewhere. The American debt to British authors for our international friendship can never be repaid. To Dickens and Thackeray we look back with fond admiration. They are favorite writers who have helped to unite in literary sympathy the English-speaking world. Emerson, Hawthorne, and Arnold, though at times critical, have enabled each nation to understand the other. Scott, Browning, and Tennyson are loved in America as in Great Britain. The songs of Moore and Burns, of the Irish and Scotch poets, are the songs of America as of the whole British Empire. The British people have shown by memorials in Westminster Abbey their regard for Longfellow and Lowell. But we ought by united effort to honor in permanent form somewhere the name of Washington Irving. He, through his "Sketch-Book," "Crayon," and "Bracebridge Hall," did, almost a century ago, a work in building up fraternal feeling, like that which we hope to cultivate by this celebration today. He portrayed to Americans beautiful pictures of English country life, with which by long residence he was familiar. He helped to give an enduring charm to Stratford-on-Avon, to Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey. He put before us our classic picture of Westminster Abbey. He helped to make Americans of British descent, who had been estranged by the War of 1812, look back to Great Britain as to their old home; and we shall never know how powerful have been his writings in making three generations of Americans, derived from all nationalities, feel their kinship with the British race. If ever there should be another place for the recognition of an American in yonder Abbey, which is sacred alike to America as to England, it might well be made for Washington Irving, first man of letters to lay the foundation of our hundred years of peace.

The British and the American peoples, their friendship made possible at the outset by ties of blood, by a common language and literature, by like systems of law, by the same conceptions of freedom, the government of each, though differing in form, being essentially a democracy, neither nation having ambitious designs upon the other, and yet bound together by no other alliance than what John Hay has aptly called "a partnership in the beneficent work of the world;" peoples with a record for pacific settlements between themselves which has borne the test of controversies for a hundred years,—may their friendship, with its saving message to civilization, be preserved, strengthened, and hallowed throughout centuries of peace to come!



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